

VERMONT TOBACCO EVALUATION AND REVIEW BOARD
BOARD MEETING

Wednesday, January 14, 2009 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

The Pavilion Building, 109 State Street, Montpelier
Governor's 4th Floor Conference Room

Present: Edna Fairbanks-Williams, Dani Carey, Kate Larose, Christy Mihaly, Amy Brewer, Brian Flynn, Greg MacDonald, Teresa Leyro, Chris Finley, Ted Marcy.

Members of the Public Present: Kelly Stoddard, Magdalena Nawrocka, Catherine Machalaba, Rebecca Ryan, Yvonne Zietlow.

MINUTES

Minutes appear in italicized typeface.

Public Comment (10 min)
No formal public comment.

Miscellaneous Announcements: Christy introduced Cate Machalaba from the Dartmouth MPH program. She will be working with the AG's office on Youth Access. Christy and others also mentioned that the VPR programs on tobacco issues were done well. Stephen will post links to the podcasts and audio recordings of the broadcasts.

Approval of Minutes (5 min)
The minutes from the November Board meeting are approved. If there are any changes, contact Stephen. EDNA: MOTION TO ACCEPT NOVEMBER MINUTES. TED: SECONDED. MINUTES ARE ACCEPTED.

Announcements (Brian) (15 min)

- Smoke-Free Policy and Heart Attacks: Update

Brian referred to an article which showed evidence that when people are exposed less to smoking in a geographical area, there are fewer heart attacks. This article spoke about a policy initiative in Pueblo, Colorado. The hospital admission rate for heart attacks decreased by 27%. Christy mentioned that Representative Klein is introducing a bill to ban smoking 50 feet from all State buildings.

- Review of VTERB 2009 Timeline

The timeline presents some of the annual cycles of Board activities. There is a larger cycle of the ten-year tobacco control program outcomes (2001-2010).

Brian noted that the Board will need to set up another program framework for the next decade (2010-2020). The timeline will become more detailed as we progress through the year and work on that framework. In the meantime, if there are suggestions for other items to the timeline, send them to Stephen.

- Meeting with AHS Leadership

Brian distributed a one-page outline for the meeting with Secretary Hofmann to be held on Friday, January 16th. If there are suggestions for editing the document, please send them to Brian.

- Health Commissioner's Designee

Deputy Commissioner Chris Finley is the new Board designee for VDH. We appreciate her experience and participation.

RTI Site Visit Discussion

(15 min)

Ted discussed the site visit last month (December, 2008). There were excellent exchanges at that site visit; much of which still needs to be digested. Ted presented slides from RTI evaluator Matthew Farrelly that showed how Vermont compares to the national average across time (2001-present) for: adult and youth prevalence, cessation efforts, intentions to quit, healthcare professional advisements, access to services, utilization of services, public perception of smoking, second hand smoking policies, and other indicators of progress. Another theme was the recommendation of efforts to emphasize policy change rather than community education. This review will guide further discussions on what is the right mix of funding components. RTI recommended a broad approach but also has specific recommendations on a variety of areas which we need to digest. We will create a summary of the site visit discussion for review and reference in the months to come.

Annual Report/Executive Summary

(15 min)

Brian reviewed the process the Board has used to review and refine the 2009 Annual Report Executive Summary. Brian briefly took the Board members through each section of the executive summary. Kate suggested we consider how we present the youth rate change over time as a prevalence statistic: Stephen and Brian will confer on the exact language of this change after the meeting. Stephen will post the report to the website and disseminate it to Board members. The annual report will be delivered to the Governor and General Assembly on January 15th.

Review of October Budget Recommendation

(15 min)

The Board understands that program funding increases may not be feasible in view of current challenges. This is conveyed through the third section on the

first page of the executive summary of the annual report. We may be asked to revise our recommendations given the state of the economy.

Tobacco Tax Increase Policy

(20 min)

There is talk about potential efforts to increase the excise tax. Should the Board have a simple position statement to support general efforts to increase the excise tax? Brian referred to the draft language he developed with the advice of other Board members. Ted suggested that this would be helpful to adopt to allow the Board to quickly respond to future policy proposals. Ted mentioned that he favors a broad statement that excludes a dollar amount or details about tax treatment of "other tobacco products". Chris F. also agrees with the simplicity of the draft statement. Christy suggested that it might be difficult to pass this as the federal tax will come into play. Greg suggested that high increases are most effective.

Amy questioned the language around "cigarettes" rather than "tobacco". There might be two issues to deal with: weight based tax vs. a flat rate. Christy discussed the history and perceived problems with weight-based taxation and the complications of including these details in a broad statement. Suggested change: "excise taxes" would replace the word "policies" in the draft.

TED: MOTION TO ADOPT POLICY WITH LANGUAGE AS EDITED.

GREG: SECONDED. FURTHER DISCUSSION: BRIAN RE-READ THE EDITED STATEMENT. It is intended to be a broad statement to facilitate testimony about the topic. Teresa and others suggested other minor language changes. Board members discussed the possibility of future statements addressing a specific tax policy proposal, however, the current situation supports the need for more general recommendations. TED, GREG: THESE CHANGES ARE ACCEPTED WITHIN THE CURRENT MOTION. ALL IN FAVOR; NONE OPPOSED. [Final language of the statement appears at the end of these meeting minutes and within the Board's 2009 Annual Report.]

Media Contract RFP Update (Brian)

(10 min)

Brian introduced the topic of the media RFP which will be awarded in the summer. Yvonne Zietlow of the VDH was asked to discuss some of the details. Yvonne reports that it will be a similar process than previous years, except that there will be a bidders' conference. There will be a diverse selection committee to discuss bidder proposals. The Board will vote (March 11) on the VDH Commissioner's recommendation.

DOE RFP Update (KATE)

Kate shared materials and updated the Board about the Department of Education RFP grant process. The process is not very different than last year. If anyone, after reviewing the materials, has a question or suggestions they should contact Kate by Tuesday, January 20th. The “coordinated school health model” (CDC Grant) acknowledges limited resources and includes a wide variety of health topics into ‘wellness communities’ in the schools. Also discussed were the nuances about coordination and implementation of the framework. This program is mentioned as a CDC best practice.

Youth Access Update (Christy)

(15 min)

Christy gave a brief update about youth access. Patsy French is sponsoring legislation to increase fines for retailers and fines to minors. Draft language was submitted by the AG’s office. Items of this nature may move along slowly given the priorities of the legislature. The bill will be a good introduction to some legislators about the issue of youth access to tobacco.

Smoke-free workplace efforts: Chris Finley mentioned S7, the bill introduced to completely eliminate smoking in the workplace. Kevin Mullin was the sponsor. Patsy was the companion bill sponsor. VDH sees difficulty in the wording regarding the enforcement responsibilities. Chris F. will be in touch with Stephen as things move forward. Ted sees this as a simple loophole fix. Christy mentioned the importance of testimony that highlights effectiveness of such policies (e.g.: the Pueblo, Colorado article discussed earlier in the meeting).

Other Business

(5 min)

Federal legislation called “The Pact” could pass this year. It would define tobacco products as illegal to mail.

Meeting Adjourned at 4:45.

Minutes submitted by: Stephen Morabito

Draft Minutes Approved by: Brian Flynn

Final language for tax policy statement:

Public policies that increase the unit price of tobacco products through excise taxes are among the most effective methods available to reduce tobacco use. An abundance of evidence has demonstrated that an increase in excise tax decreases initiation of tobacco use by young people, increases cessation of tobacco use by smokers, and decreases the overall consumption of tobacco in the population. These reductions in tobacco use will have a beneficial impact

on the health of the public and on health care costs. Based on this evidence, the Tobacco Evaluation and Review Board supports increases in the cigarette excise tax to reduce cigarette smoking initiation and prevalence, and excise taxes that are likely to achieve equivalent effects on use of other tobacco products.